



NAVY HISTORY MATTERS

July 2, 2019



Compiled by Brent Hunt, Naval History and Heritage Command's Communication and Outreach Division

Welcome to Navy History Matters—our weekly compilation of articles, commentaries, and blogs related to history and heritage. Every week we'll gather the top-interest items from a variety of media and social media sources and then link you to related content at NHHC's website (history.navy.mil), your authoritative source for Navy history.

★ First African American Submarine CO has Died

Capt. C.A. "Pete" Tzomes—the first African American to command a nuclear-powered submarine—died at the University of Iowa Hospitals & Clinics, Iowa City, IA, June 13. He was 74. He was the first of the "[Centennial Seven](#)," who were the only seven African American men to command submarines during the first 100 years of the U.S. Navy [submarine force](#). Tzomes was born on Dec. 30, 1944, in Williamsport, PA, and his parents taught him at a young age the principles of hard work and achieving goals. While in junior high school, a U.S. Naval Academy midshipman visited the school and showed the film [Ring of Valor](#). From that point, Tzomes knew what he wanted to be in life. Although originally turned down, he eventually obtained an appointment at the Naval Academy and excelled at math, Russian courses, and athletics. He received his commission as an ensign on June 7, 1967. Tzomes wanted to become a Marine Corps pilot but was turned down, so he opted for the submarine force. After several assignments, Tzomes took command of [USS Houston](#) (SSN-713) in May 1983. To learn more, [read the essay](#) by NHHC historian Dr. Regina T. Akers at [NHHC's website](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/browse-by-topic/people/trailblazers/pete-tzomes-trailblazer.html>

★ H-Gram 032

In his latest H-Gram, NHHC Director [Sam Cox](#) focuses on [Operation Forager](#), the July 1944 offensive drive in the Marianas, and gives a blow-by-blow account of the [Battle of the Philippine Sea](#). Forager began with the invasion of Saipan, and with determined Japanese resistance, made it the costliest land battle of the Pacific Theater to date. However, the ultimate success of the operation provided bases for the Allies that brought the Japanese home islands into the range of U.S. B-29 bombers. The resounding U.S. victory in the Battle of the Philippine Sea, fought shortly after the Saipan landings, sealed the fate of the Imperial Japanese navy's carrier force and Japanese naval aviation. To learn more, read [H-Gram 032](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nara-series/80-g/80-G-230000/80-G-238025.html>

★ WWII@75: Guam Bombardment Operations Begin

On July 8, 1944, 75 years ago, cruisers and destroyers of Task Group 53.18, commanded by Rear Adm. [Charles Turner Joy](#), began daily bombardment operations on Japanese defenses in Guam. Battleships joined the bombardment group on July 14. Guam had been under Japanese control for 31 months since Japan captured it from the U.S. shortly after the [Pearl Harbor attack](#). After weeks of bombardment operations, on July 21, U.S. Marines and Soldiers made amphibious landings on Guam marking the beginning of the liberation of the island. To this day, [Guam Liberation Day](#) is celebrated annually on July 21 marking the day American forces brought the fight to the island's oppressors.



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhhc-series/nh-series/80-G-59000/80-G-59459.html>

★ U.S. Navy Remembers Beginning of Korean War

U.S. Navy Sailors serving on the Korean peninsula honored the 69th anniversary of the beginning of the [Korean War](#) by participating in multiple commemorations, June 25–26. The commemorations were to honor those who sacrificed their lives during the war. “The lives lost here, the men and women who lay in this ground, are our reminders of the terrible cost of war,” said Rear Adm. [Michael Donnelly](#), commander, U.S. Naval Forces Korea. “Today, we remember that our dedication to this region is our promise to honor their memory by continuing to strive for peace and stability on the peninsula and around the world.” On June 25, 1950, North Korea invaded South Korea and within days, Seoul fell to the North Koreans. Over the course of the war, fighting went back-and-forth across the 38th parallel until an armistice was signed in July 1953. U.S. service members remain stationed in South Korea today to ensure the sovereignty of the peninsula is maintained. To learn more, [read the U.S. Navy release](#).



Photo Link: https://www.navy.mil/view_image.asp?id=10513&t=4

★ John S. McCain Commissioned 25 Years Ago

On July 2, 1994, 25 years ago, [USS John S. McCain](#) was commissioned at Bath Iron Works, ME. The ship was originally named for [father-son admirals](#) John S. McCain Sr. and John S. McCain Jr., but on July 12, 2018, Secretary of the Navy [Richard V. Spencer](#) inducted former U.S. Senator [John S. McCain III](#) as an official namesake of the ship as well. The ship took part in [Operation Iraqi Freedom](#) in 2003 and participated in [Operation Tomodachi](#) in 2011, which provided humanitarian assistance to the victims of a magnitude 9.0 undersea megathrust earthquake off the northern Japanese coast. On Aug. 21, 2017, the ship was involved in a collision with a merchant vessel off the coast of Singapore and Malaysia that killed 10 Sailors.



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/histories/ship-histories/danfs/j/JohnSMcCain.html>

★ Records of the Union and Confederate Navies

On July 7, 1884, the project to gather, edit and publish *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion* had begun under the direction of [James R. Soley](#)—librarian of the Navy Department. The final volume was published in 1922. The completed records became part of a 1945 Director of Naval History directive to publish day-to-day war diary and progress reports maintained during [World War I](#) and [World War II](#). *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion* was included to provide background of prewar functions and purposes for those not familiar with its existence.

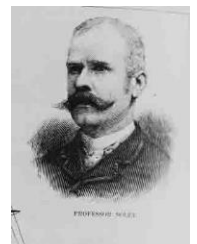


Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/us-people/s/soley-james-r/nh-45020.html>

★ Navy Christens Littoral Combat Ship *Oakland*

The U.S. Navy christened its newest Independence-variant littoral combat ship during a ceremony in Mobile, AL, June 29. The future [USS Oakland](#) will be the third U.S. Navy ship named in honor of the northern California city, and she will be homeported in San Diego, CA. “The christening of the future USS *Oakland* marks an important step toward this great ship's entry into the fleet,” said Secretary of the Navy [Richard V. Spencer](#). “The dedication and skilled work of our industry partners ensure this ship will represent the great city of Oakland and serve our Navy and Marine Corps team for decades to come.” To learn more, read the [U.S. Navy release](#) and [the article](#) in the *Times of San Diego*.

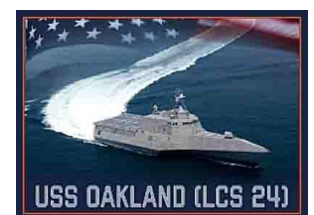


Photo Link: https://www.navy.mil/view_image.asp?id=291190&t=1

★ Nautical Terms and Naval Expressions: Seamanship Edition Part 2

Seamanship is the foundation of a Sailor's life at sea. Whether it is basic navigation, line handling, or just knowing your way around a ship, basic seamanship plays a role in keeping Sailors safe, oriented, and organized. In this edition of basic seamanship, we explore some terms that relate to passing and securing lines of a ship. Nautical terms used today are composed of elements from many different languages. The term belay is of Dutch origin and dates back to the 15th century. To belay means to fasten, and in handling a ship, a Sailor belays a line to a cleat or other fixed point to keep the ship from sailing away. The term cleat comes from the Middle English word clete, meaning wedge. The cleat is used to secure a ship's lines. To learn more, [read the blog](#) at [The Sextant](#).



Photo Link:

https://usnhistory.navylive.dodlive.mil/files/2019/06/FINAL_NauticalTerms_Seamanship_Part2_lowres_JPEG.jpg

★ Graves of 30 U.S. Service Members Found on Pacific WWII Battlefield

A nonprofit organization that searches for the remains of U.S. service members found what they believe are the graves of more than 30 Marines and Sailors killed on the remote Pacific atoll of Tarawa. The remains are assumed to belong to Marines and Sailors from the 6th Marine Regiment that participated in the [Battle of Tarawa](#). More than 1,000 U.S. Marines and Sailors were killed in the bloody 1943 [World War II](#) battle. The nonprofit, [History Flight](#), has recovered the remains of 272 individuals from Tarawa since 2015 when it began excavating under a contract with the Department of Defense. The organization believes there are at least 270 more to be found. The [Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency](#) expects to pick up the found remains and fly them to Hawaii by next month to work on identifying the service members using dental records and DNA. To learn more, [read the article](#) at ABC News. Also, read [Reclaiming a Lost Hero of World War II](#) that tells the story of a grandson looking for his grandfather who was lost at Tarawa.



Photo Link: <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/wireStory/graves-30-us-servicemen-found-pacific-wwii-battlefield-63951537>

★ Blue Angels Getting New Fat Albert

Naval Air Systems Command (NAVAIR) announced, June 24, the acquisition of a new "Fat Albert"—the [Blue Angels](#) cargo plane—has been approved. A C-130J Super Hercules will be delivered in spring 2020. It will replace the recently retired C-130T. The contract was awarded to the United Kingdom Ministry of Defence at a \$29.7 million price tag. The "new" C-130T is actually a divested UK aircraft, and it was chosen because of the major cost savings. According to NAVAIR, the used aircraft is approximately \$50 million less than the cost of a new aircraft. The acquisition of the aircraft from the UK was due to "high operational tempo and current demand nature of Navy assets" that prevented the Navy from simply taking one from the fleet. To learn more, [read the article](#) at *Business Insider*. To learn more on the [history of the Blue Angels](#), go to [NHHC's website](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/news-and-events/multimedia-gallery/infographics/history/history-of-the-blue-angels0.html>

★ NHHC Webpage of the Week

In celebration of America's Independence Day, this week's Webpage of the Week comes from NHHC's extensive infographic collection. [America, Independence, Freedom](#) shares the history of U.S. Navy ships that bear the name *America*, *Independence*, and *Freedom*. Did you know the first ship to carry the name *America* was a 74-gun man-of-war that was gifted to King Louis XVI of France to replace the French ship *Magnifique*, which had been destroyed on Aug. 11, 1782, while attempting to enter Boston Harbor. *America* was gifted to the French to symbolize America's appreciation for France's service to and sacrifices in behalf of the cause of American patriots. Check out this informative infographic today and have a Happy Fourth of July!



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/news-and-events/multimedia-gallery/infographics/heritage/america-independence-and-freedom.html>

★ Today in Naval History

On July 2, 1937, Amelia Earhart and her navigator Fred Noonan disappeared over the Pacific Ocean. U.S. Coast Guard cutter *Itasca*, [USS Colorado](#), [USS Lexington](#) and PBY aircraft from Hawaii were dispatched, but the extensive search was unsuccessful. The pair were on a 2,000-mile flight from Lae, New Guinea, to Howland Island on the trans-Pacific portion of her attempt to circumnavigate the globe. Earhart's disappearance sparked the largest U.S. Navy search since 1921 when the tug *Conestoga* disappeared. Although there are many conspiracy theories on what happened to Earhart, it is most likely that she ran out of fuel while trying to locate the tiny island and crashed at sea. To learn more, check out the [Amelia Earhart](#) page and read [H-Gram 008](#) at [NHHC's website](#).



For more dates in naval history, including your selected span of dates, see [Year at a Glance](#) at [NHHC's website](#). Be sure to check this page regularly, as content is updated frequently.

Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/library/online-reading-room/title-list-alphabetically/a/amelia-earhart.html>